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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DOHA 000572

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MOPS](#) [IR](#) [IQ](#) [QA](#)
SUBJECT: DEPSECDEF ENGLAND'S DISCUSSIONS WITH QATAR'S AMIR
AND ARMED FORCES CHIEF OF STAFF

Classified By: Amb. Joseph LeBaron, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Deputy Secretary of Defense Gordon England visited Doha August 5-6 for meetings with the Amir, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, and the Chief of Staff of the Qatar Armed Forces, MG Hamad bin Ali al-Attiyeh. Al-Attiyeh also hosted England and his party for dinner the evening of his arrival, and for lunch with other Qatari military and security chiefs the following day. Discussions focused on the U.S.-Qatar military partnership, and developments in Iraq and Iran. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) Looking tired but tanned and accompanied by his daughter (and office director) Sheikha Hind, the Amir received England for a full hour August 6 at his private residence in Wajba Palace. Mr. England was joined by Special Assistants Robert Earl and Hesham Islam, and by DCM.

13. (C) England began by thanking the Amir for his leadership, singling out Qatari assistance to victims of Hurricane Katrina and the Qatari role in brokering an agreement between rival parties in Lebanon. The Amir expressed relief that the Lebanon negotiations were over, but added that the issue of Shebaa Farms remains to be resolved) an issue that he believes should be handled by the UN. When that is resolved, he said, peace between Israel and Lebanon would be possible.

14. (C) Turning to Iraq, England said the situation there is clearly settling down and the long-term prospects are good. He said he will be visiting Iraq after Qatar in order to meet the business people who are so important for economic development there. England explained that as Iraq has become more secure, it would be very helpful if Qatar strengthened its diplomatic ties with Baghdad. There have been dramatic changes in the past 6-8 months, the situation is looking hopeful, and stronger ties with Qatar would be helpful.

15. (C) The Amir did not respond directly to the issue of diplomatic relations, only commenting that the Iraqis are difficult people and "you can't trust them." It's clear that the U.S. can't leave Iraq right away, he said, but the challenge is finding a strong leader who can control the country. Jalal Talibani, he added, is not a strong leader. England said the challenge is to develop a strong central government capable of running the country. The Amir agreed, adding that it would be chaos if the U.S. left too soon. But, he added, he thinks Iraq may become chaos anyway.

16. (C) The Amir went on to say that the key to stability in Iraq is its relationship with Iran. Iran, in fact, is the key to the whole region and incentives now being offered to Iran will hopefully encourage their leadership to be more reasonable. The Amir added that he's sure Iran wants cooperation with the U.S., but managing the nuclear issue remains a challenge. He expressed hope that Iran will

understand that there is a peaceful way forward, but regretted that the whole region is now worried about the Straits of Hormuz.

¶17. (C) England said an Iran with nuclear weapons would be very destabilizing for the whole region; on the other hand, Iran should realize that it could be a part of all the economic development currently under way in the region. The Amir agreed, remarking that with Iran's hydrocarbons and Western technology, they could develop those resources. Iran, he said, will not give up its nuclear ambitions easily, lamenting that so many countries in the region are now pursuing nuclear weapons. England responded that until now, no country with nuclear weapons has ever expressed a desire to actually use them. That might change if Iran develops these weapons. The Amir responded that he doesn't think Iran would use such weapons "except to defend itself."

¶18. (C) The Amir turned to education, noting that he regards this as fundamental to the future of Qatar. England agreed, and congratulated the Amir on his leadership in this area. The Amir said the thanks should go to the U.S. universities for agreeing to establish branch campuses in Qatar. England said this took far-sighted leadership, and that universities that bring students together from so many different countries are the best way to build vitally important relationships.

¶19. (C) England noted that although there will be a new U.S. administration in January, the strategic relationship with Qatar will continue. He explained that many of the most senior U.S. military officers, including the Chairman of the

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Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Chief of Staff of the Air Force will continue in those positions for several more years.

¶10. (C) England closed by noting that the Palestinian Authority is in dire financial straits and needs help. The Palestinians need an alternative to Hamas. The Amir said Israel needs to talk to Hamas. They "talk" to Hezbollah; now it is time to talk to Hamas.

¶11. (C) In an earlier meeting at the Qatar Armed Forces headquarters, England met with Qatar Armed Forces Chief of Staff Major General Hamad al-Attiyeh. England thanked al-Attiyeh for Qatar's hospitality and support for U.S. forces. He said he was delighted by Qatar's decision to purchase C-17 and C-130 aircraft.

¶12. (C) Al-Attiyeh said he was pleased that the contracts were signed. Qatar had studied its requirements very carefully and decided to pursue a capacity to undertake humanitarian operations, such as those they have done in Lebanon and Pakistan. They also want to transport their personnel to exercises, such as an upcoming one in Mongolia.

¶13. (C) England mentioned plans to build a second runway at Al-Udeid. Al-Attiyeh said after the B-1 incident, they saw clearly the need for a second runway. In addition, Qatar's Air Force will move to Al-Udeid when the new Doha International Airport is completed, and so more space will be needed. Al-Attiyeh said he hopes to "finish this proposal" soon and send it to the Heir Apparent. (Note: this suggests a final decision to move ahead with) and pay for) the second runway has not been made.)
LeBaron